

CROSS-CUTTING PROGRAMS AND ISSUES

Success in meeting many of the Department's performance goals depends on the close coordination and integration of program activities, both within the Department and with other Federal agencies. This section highlights the special efforts of the Department to link programs, eliminate duplication, and improve program results.

Strategic Goal 1 – A Prepared Workforce

Within Strategic Goal 1, five of the most significant cross-cutting initiatives with other Agencies are:

- Welfare-to-Work Programs
- School-to-Work Initiatives
- Workforce Development System Improvement
- Veterans Workforce Development Programs
- Labor and Economic Data and Analysis.

Welfare-to-Work Programs

Under recent Welfare-to-Work legislation, the Department assumed significant responsibility for new programs that move persons from welfare to employment. DOL activities include numerous links among its own agencies, and with other Federal government agencies whose programs serve the disadvantaged, many of whom are members of minority groups, welfare recipients, Indian and Native Americans, migrants and seasonal

farm workers, older workers, and dislocated workers—including those dislocated by trade policies.

The Department's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) works with State and local agencies, the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS), Transportation (DOT), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and other Federal and DOL agencies to assist individuals as they move from welfare to work. ETA-sponsored activities include a project to develop a welfare recipients' profiling system, using Unemployment Insurance tax and wage records to improve labor market information and support other programs. The DOL agencies cooperating in this program include the Women's Bureau (WB), the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the Employment Standards Administration (ESA), the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy (ASP), and the Solicitor's Office (SOL). The Departments of Interior and Agriculture have also provided support for the planning and development of this project.

School-to-Work Initiatives

The National School-to-Work Office (NSTWO) is administered jointly by the Departments of Education and Labor. The School-to-Work (STW) Research and Evaluation Committee, which includes members from ETA and the Department of Education, has

coordinated ten different research efforts. Four of these initiatives use data and results from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, a multiple-year effort of BLS. A fifth research project involves evaluating the NSTWO's level of support for the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) implementation.

The NSTWO has collaborated with the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the Department of Education to help youth with disabilities participate in STW activities. The NSTWO also entered into a joint venture with DOT to provide logistics and planning for promoting career development activities for youth in transportation. In CY 2000, the NSTWO will collaborate with the President's Council on Youth with Disabilities and the Social Security Administration on another project to increase access to STW activities for youth with disabilities.

Workforce Development System Improvement

All states received grants to implement the One-Stop Career Center system to provide job seekers and employers with access to Federal, State and local resources related to workforce development. As of November 1999, more than 1,100 One-Stop centers had been established nationwide. The One-Stop delivery system, authorized under the Workforce Investment Act, has consolidated a fragmented array of employment and training programs into an integrated information-job service delivery system. One-Stop transformation means that individual offices offer all the business lines of "core services" to their customers.

To provide more customer-focused services, the effort has required building new partnerships not only with Federal agencies, but also with a wider array of stakeholders associated with the One-Stop delivery system at the State and local levels. A key feature is the unified planning among Federal partner agencies; draft guidelines for a unified planning process were developed at the end of FY 1999.

The Workforce Development Performance Measures (WDPM) Initiative developed a menu of common performance measures with standard definitions and a continuous improvement strategy for voluntary use by partners in the workforce system. The previous set of diverse performance measures in the One-Stop partner programs served as a barrier to program integration and coordinated service delivery. As a follow-up to this initiative, the Department began discussions with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, and the Department of Education (DOEd) on the development of common definitions and One-Stop program measures.

Veterans Programs

The Department's employment and training programs for veterans and soon-to-be-separated service members and their spouses and families are coordinated closely with the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Veterans Affairs (VA). DOL's interagency agreement with both organizations for implementing the Transition Assistance Program will better assist service members and their spouses and families in preparing for reentry into the civilian

labor market. This program operates on approximately 185 military bases across the country. DOL also has a separate interagency agreement with the VA that ties the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling program to DOL-funded programs that provide placement services. Under the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP), DOL coordinates closely with HUD and the VA to refer homeless veterans who are in need of shelter or substance abuse assistance. Once these basic needs have been met, the veterans are referred back to the DOL for assistance in finding jobs.

Labor and Economic Data and Analysis

Since BLS serves as the statistical resource for DOL, coordination with other Federal, State, and international statistical agencies is important to effective BLS performance. The major FY 1999 cross-cutting activities and accomplishments include:

- BLS and the Bureau of the Census have continued to work together in an effort to improve the universe files used for survey samples. This effort is expected to be completed in CY 2000.
- The Workforce Information Council, comprised of State and DOL representatives as mandated by the Workforce Investment Act, drafted the first strategic plan for the nationwide workforce information system.
- BLS staff from the Covered Employment and Wages (ES-202) program continued to work with Canada and Mexico on maintaining consistency in North American Industry Classification system (NAICS) coding.

- Staff from the Producer Price Index collaborated with Canada and Mexico on the North American Product Coding System, a new demand-based classification structure.

Strategic Goal 2 – A Secure Workforce

To promote A Secure Workforce, DOL organizations engage in the following priority cross-cutting programs and issues:

- Wage and Labor Standards Protections
- Pension and Health Care Policy Development and Regulation Enforcement
- Unemployment Insurance Fund Integrity
- Workers' Compensation Programs

Wage and Labor Standards Protections

ESA's Wage and Hour Division is charged with enforcing the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), contract labor standards, the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act (MSPA), the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Employee Polygraph Protection Act, and provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Cooperative efforts with other DOL agencies, including OSHA, ETA, PWBA, and SOL; Federal agencies, such as the Department of Justice's (DOJ), Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and various contracting agencies, and the States are undertaken in a number of these areas, especially relating to the goal of increasing compliance in low-wage industries such as garment manufacturing, agriculture, and the

health care industries. In addition, Wage and Hour, together with OSHA enforces compliance with laws related to field sanitation and temporary labor camps. Other joint activities include:

- Cooperative efforts with various State agencies ensure compliance with housing and transportation standards enforced by both Federal and State agencies;
- The Worker Exploitation Task Force, a joint DOL and DOJ initiative, investigates and coordinates cases involving alleged abuses of low-wage vulnerable workers for criminal prosecution;
- ESA works closely with INS to implement a revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) intended to allay fears of retaliation in the immigrant community that prevent labor abuse complaints from being filed; and
- The Federal/State Child Labor Task Force was established in July 1999 to promote the Secretary's Safe Work/Safe Kids initiative. The Task Force aims to improve coordination of child labor enforcement and outreach activities and enhance communication. Efforts include sharing youth employment data and developing strategies that promote safe employment.

Pension and Health Care Policy Development and Regulation Enforcement

In carrying out the Department's Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) Federal Employment Retirement Security Act (FERSA) responsibilities, DOL coordinates its enforcement, regulatory, public information, and policy programs

with numerous Federal, State and local entities.

Under ERISA, PWBA shares responsibility with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). The broad sweep of enforcement responsibilities also requires coordination with agencies that regulate financial institutions such as: Comptroller of the Currency, Federal Reserve System, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), National Credit Union Administration, Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), State Insurance and financial regulatory entities, as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Office of the Inspector General (OIG), U.S. Postal Service (USPS), and State and local law enforcement agencies.

PWBA also works with the Department of Treasury, HHS, the National Economic Council, Bureau of the Census, BLS, the Thrift Savings Board, and the Small Business Administration (SBA). Cooperative efforts include the Department's recent joint initiative with the SBA to expand pension coverage for women, minorities and small businesses; ongoing coordination with HHS and Treasury on health care policy and regulations; pension education initiatives; and a coordinated enforcement approach with Federal, State and local enforcement agencies.

In the international arena, PWBA provides assistance to the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), the World Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and foreign governments by conducting seminars and providing technical assistance on retirement security issues to visiting officials

from other countries. Technical assistance includes providing information on the establishment of private pension systems; developing policy; establishing legal structures to support the systems; and creating and operating regulatory institutions.

PWBA is participating in a number of DOL cross-cutting programs. The new E-Fast 5500 filing system will be implemented in FY 2000. This system will make it easier for plan officials to file electronically by on-line transmission, CD-ROM, floppy disk, or tape. Further, PWBA will be establishing a customer service help desk to assist Form 5500 filers make use of the new filing system and will be exploring the use of toll free customer service phone lines to respond to participant inquiries regarding their benefits. These initiatives are a component of the DOL Improving Customer Service with Technology Cross-Cut.

PWBA will also be participating in DOL's One-Stop and Coordinated Compliance Assistance Cross-Cuts by providing educational materials on health and pension issues for distribution to employers and employees. PWBA will be working closely with ETA and State Bureau of Employment Services to provide assistance to dislocated workers through ETA's One-Stop program. The agency will also be providing services to dislocated workers by participating in state, regional and national meetings and conferences, and coordinating with the American Federation of Labor/Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) and the regional Workers Adjustment Retraining Notification Act (WARN) program.

As part of the Department's Innovative Enforcement Cross-Cut

Initiative, PWBA has developed the Voluntary Compliance for Fiduciary Breaches program to provide administrative procedures to plan officials, including small businesses, to help correct inadvertent fiduciary violations and restore health and pension plans to compliance.

Unemployment Insurance Fund Integrity

DOL is providing leadership within a Federal-State partnership for the review and reform of Unemployment Insurance administrative financing and the examination of eligibility provisions to expand the safety net for low-wage workers who lose their jobs. DOL has been working closely with Treasury, OMB, the Council of Economic Advisors, and National Economic Council on its safety net proposal and solvency targets, and will soon be consulting with State agencies and other stakeholders to pursue reforms of UI and Wagner-Peyser programs.

Electronic links have been forged with the Department of Treasury for the transfer of accounting data between the UI Trust Fund accounting system and DOL. The IRS, Social Security Administration (SSA), DOL, and private industry continue to work on a Simplified Tax and Wage Reporting System (STAWRS). Electronic exchange of data with SSA will increase the speed and accuracy of determinations on UI claims, reducing fraud in an era of electronic benefit filing.

The Department is continuing to work with Treasury and SSA to develop uniform wage record forms, reporting, simplify tax reporting, and enhance electronic reporting, with the goal of reducing employers' costs of submitting tax forms and providing ETA and other agencies with more

timely information for ensuring program integrity. Finally, ETA and BLS are working together to improve general accuracy and accessibility of UI data. In particular, the two agencies are focusing on the wage record data used for economic indicators, identifying inter-area commuters, and program outcome data on post-program earnings used for a variety of workforce development programs.

Workers' Compensation Programs

The Department oversees the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) program, which involves every Federal agency. Under the Presidential Initiative – Federal Worker 2000 – the Employment Standards Administration (ESA) has begun to collect disability days information in the "continuation-of-pay" period from Federal employers. This data will be used to measure the lost production days (LPD) rate in all Federal injury cases. ESA is also working in partnership with the Federal agencies to improve the timeliness of injury claims submissions and to increase re-employment opportunities. The Agency Query System (AQS) and Periodic Roll Management (PRM) are designed to improve relations and cooperation with other agencies. AQS provides employing agencies access to information on their employees' disability cases, while PRM assists agencies with cost management by identifying disability cessation in cases on the long-term benefit roll.

Strategic Goal 3 – Quality Workplaces

The cross-cutting programs supporting Quality Workplaces include:

- Occupational Safety and Health Coordination
- Federal Contract Compliance Activities
- Domestic and International Child Care Initiatives
- International Labor Affairs Collaboration

Occupational Safety and Health Coordination

In FY 1999, OSHA leveraged its resources by working with other Federal agencies and within DOL to achieve the Department's goals. Within the Department, OSHA and MSHA coordinated their regulatory efforts to reduce workers' exposure to silica. Through frequent meetings of the regulatory staff, the two agencies have ensured the consistency of their draft proposals. The agencies have also shared cost, feasibility, and toxicology information to reduce the need for independent research.

OSHA has collaborated with ESA on efforts to reduce workplace abuses facing young and underage workers by participating in the Secretary's Child Labor task force to strengthen enforcement policies. OSHA and ESA developed referral policies so that recalcitrant employers or repeat violators are dealt with appropriately. OSHA has also been working with BLS to standardize forms used by the nation's six million employers to record workplace injuries and illnesses, and continues to consult with BLS on proposed revisions to the record keeping requirements in an attempt to simplify the current regulation. Finally, BLS and OSHA collaborated to develop specialized information relating to the agency's priority regulation dealing with ergonomics.

Significant coordination with Federal agencies, especially with the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), also took place in FY 1999. OSHA used NIOSH scientific expertise in a number of areas. The most important effort was the joint work between the two agencies on worker exposure to silica. At OSHA's direction, NIOSH conducted 20 on-site visits to collect information on exposures to silica and acceptable control technologies. Research was completed on the toxicity of alternatives to sand that could be used as a blasting agent. The research results from this collaboration will be invaluable to the rule-making process on silica control and exposure.

OSHA, NIOSH, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have established the ONE Committee, which meets regularly to exchange scientific information about toxic chemicals. This process eliminates duplication, improves the quality of information used in the regulatory process, and assures consistency of the regulatory requirements. Significant ongoing coordination with EPA also takes place in a number of other areas. For example, the two agencies have a standing committee to address chemical process safety issues, as both agencies have regulations affecting the operation of chemical plants.

Finally, OSHA, the Department of Defense, EPA, the Department of State, the U.S. Coast Guard, and several other organizations worked together on a panel to address environmental, health, and occupational safety concerns associated with scrapping ships. Based on panel recommendations, OSHA and EPA jointly developed a

draft compliance guide to provide site supervisors at scrapping facilities with an overview of the most pertinent environmental and safety requirements.

Federal Contract Compliance Activities

ESA continued to demonstrate the Department's commitment to internal and external cooperative efforts, serving as a key player on a team assembled by the Secretary to develop innovative, cooperative programs and policies to foster and implement the Administration's and Secretarial Equal Pay initiative. This interagency team is comprised of ESA, the Women's Bureau (WB), ETA, MSHA, Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP), and PWBA.

The Department's regular use of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is another reflection of DOL's commitment to formalize complementary efforts between Federal agencies. For example, ESA's MOU with the Department of Justice's Office of Special Counsel provides for referral of complaints involving national origin discrimination, information sharing, and coordinated public outreach efforts; an MOU with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) allows for prompt referral to INS of all suspected violations against employment of unauthorized workers; and ESA's MOU with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provides procedures for the coordinated collection, sharing, and analysis of data regarding individual or class complaints of discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, or disability status.

Child Care Initiatives

To increase the number of States with child care apprenticeship programs, the Department has been coordinating with the National Association of State and Territorial Apprenticeship Directors. The Department is continuing its work with HHS on Head Start and child care issues and with the Departments of Agriculture and HUD on the revitalization of urban and rural areas. Efforts continue to establish child care facilities at Job Corps Centers and to tap the Women's Bureau for expertise on child care. The Department also works with SBA on encouraging program graduates to become independent providers/micro-entrepreneurs, and promotes opportunities for experience and training in the child care field within the School-to-Work and Welfare-to-Work programs.

International Labor Affairs Collaboration

The significance of labor issues in many international organizations and on international and bilateral agendas requires cooperation and collaboration with other Federal agencies. ILAB works closely with the Department of State, as well as USAID, the U.S. Trade Representative, and the Departments of Commerce, Treasury, and Education, to encourage countries to improve the implementation of core labor standards.

ILAB works closely with the International Labor Organization's (ILO) International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) to develop regional, country, and sector-specific projects to reduce the incidence of abusive child labor and

develop educational opportunities for children. In the course of these projects, ILAB works with U.S. and foreign industry representatives and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure programs are effective and credible. The cross-cutting cooperation and collaboration on the international front resulted in the negotiation of a new international convention on the worst forms of child labor abuses around the world. The ILO adopted the new convention, and on December 2, 1999, President Clinton signed the resolution of ratification passed by the U.S. Senate. ■